

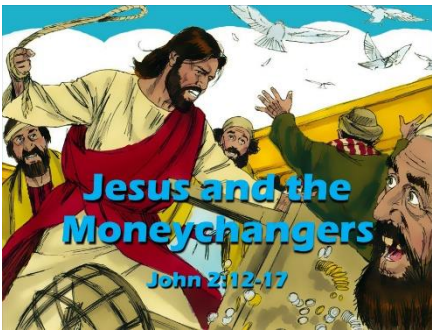
Sunday 7th March AAA Talk/reflection – Cheryl Trice

Introduction:

Today we are exploring the story of when Jesus turned over the tables at the temple. At this point you may need to pause the video for a few minutes to find a few coins, some plain paper and either some pencils or crayons. Once you have come back spend a few minutes by taking it in turns to place the paper over the coin and make coin rubbings.



Bible reading: John 2:13-22



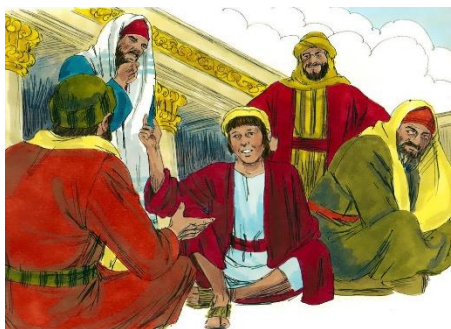
We are going to explore our bible reading this morning by imagining ourselves in it, now is the time to find a comfortable place to sit, take a moment or two to take a few deep breaths to clear your mind from other distractions so we can concentrate on being in this moment and allowing God to talk to us through this bible reading. There will be a series of pictures to look at if this helps you visualize being there as this story unfolds if you feel more comfortable closing your eyes please do so. Let's begin.....



Jesus and his disciples travelled from place-to-place teaching people about God. It was the time of the special Jewish feast of Passover they travelled to Jerusalem to worship God and take part in special ceremonies at the temple. Mary, and some of his brothers went along too. They all looked forward to a special time in Jerusalem. They thought about the beautiful temple. They thought about how people would be worshipping God at the temple.

Imagine being in amongst the disciples travelling, what can you see around you? You are you on a dirt road, notice the bushes, trees, are you at the front of the group or maybe lagging behind. As you are walking John starts to tell the group of his excitement of celebrating the Passover feast again, he is looking forward to seeing the temple, he may even see a family member who he's not seen for a while, you look out across the view and think of your own family, you have been travelling with Jesus for a while and you've missed being with them, chatting over dinner enjoying their company.

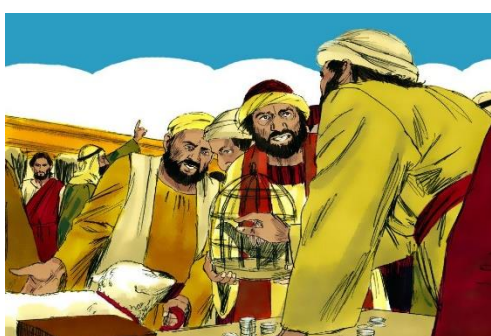
Gradually walking along the town comes into view and the noise of the chatter becomes more excited and slightly louder, you notice the path you are taking is coming alongside the lake and every step is getting you closer to your destination. You take a deep breath in and look over at Jesus who seems relaxed and contented to be with his chattering friends.



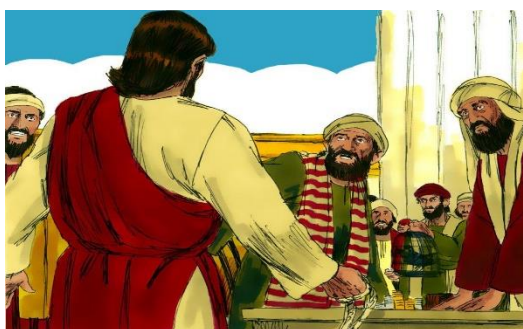
You appreciate and realise that ever since he was a young boy Jesus had been taught by his parents that the temple of God in Jerusalem was a very important place and the same for your own family, this was a place where people came to worship God and offer sacrifices. At the temple everyone was supposed to be thinking and talking about God.

As you slowly approach the temple weaving through the streets you can smell the activities and stalls of the city, the people gathered in the city are buying food from sellers, the crowds are becoming larger and the chatter and noise is becoming louder – so loud you can hardly hear the other disciples or what Jesus is saying to your group.

Take a moment to think of where it is you like to find God – imagine this place become crowded and so loud that you cannot see or hear him?



Back to approaching the temple and you realise the noise is getting even louder, there are smells and tastes in the air that are not normally there, and you are curious as to what is going on, when the temple finally comes into sight, it does not seem as if people were there to worship God at all. The people were not treating the temple like a special place of God. Instead, the temple looked like a big market! Animals are making loud noises. Alongside Jesus you hear cattle, sheep and doves. Some people are exchanging money and are trying to cheat people. The people are not thinking about God at all or that this indeed is a Holy place set apart for God, you look at the dismay and sadness on the faces of the other disciples, you turn to look at Jesus and you cannot read his face – you have never seen him look like this before, you are unsure of what is going to happen next.....



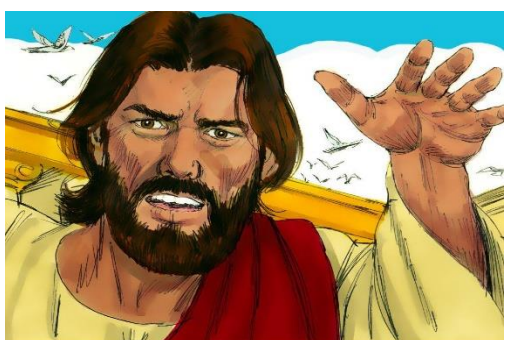
As part of the group of disciples and family that have come this far you gather close to Jesus, the feeling of sadness and uncertainty fill every part of your body, you and Jesus are very sad and angry at the way people are treating God and God's special place. The festival you were so looking forward to is being spoilt by the thoughtlessness of other people, do these people not realise that standing alongside you is Jesus....Jesus the son of God and this temple is his Father's house. He loved his father, and he loved his father's house!

Your face glances back to Jesus and you know this look... you have seen this look before....you know Jesus is about to do something drastic so that everyone would understand how serious this was.



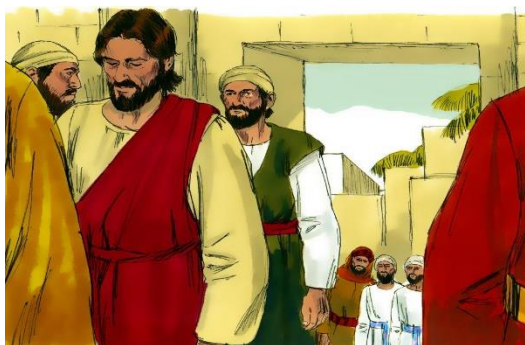
In a moment you cannot quite believe you are watching Jesus move quickly, He ties cords of rope together to make a whip to swing around, he begins swinging the rope and turning over the tables that the city people had put in the wrong places in the temple. You stand there unable to believe what you are seeing, people begin to scatter and run from the temple, market sellers begin to shout and become angry... at this time you are unsure what to do, do you stop Jesus, or do you help him? Jesus continues to shoo the birds and animals away and causes the money that people were cheating with to fall all over the ground. In amongst all the noises you still hear the money tipping and spreading all over the floor and Jesus says "Get those things out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

Time stands still for a few moments and you think how can this time in the temple be so different from what you, Jesus and the other disciples were expecting. The time you thought would be special between God and you is ruined, the feeling of coming into God's presence and the closeness of learning more about him completely devastated..... what are the thoughts that are in your mind? It could be anger, it could be disappointment, it could be you are at a loss of words or emotions, it maybe you are thinking how can I put this right?



As you scan the temple, it is now a scene of clutter, before this everyone was thinking about money and the market. Now, at last, people had time to stop and think about what Jesus had been teaching. It was time to love and respect God at his temple just like Jesus did. You look at people's faces; they look how you feel.... You turn back to look at Jesus who has sadness in his eyes but also a look of knowing it was the right thing to do, gradually and slowly people begin to talk – who is this man, why did this happen? Someone in the distance mutters about the temple being God's

house, slowly the mess and clutter is being cleared up around you, you look to where you can help, the other disciples are moving the market sellers away.....



You see the crowd is gradually thinning, as you breathe in slowly once more the smell of cattle and the marketplace is slowly dispersing & one of the others is lighting some oils to improve the smell and a small gathering of people are restoring the temple to how it should be. You glance around at the others to get a sense of how they are feeling, are they like you disappointed to have found the temple this way or are they now focused on the job of restoring God's Holy place.

By the time Jesus says it's time to leave, many people were talking about him. You hear the chatter amongst people, some had learned to love God more because of what Jesus said. Some got angry and began to say bad things about Jesus - how does your heart feel at this moment? What have you

experienced being in that place alongside Jesus and the disciples? It may have been astonishment, it may be anger at the market sellers, you may feel unsure of why Jesus became upset and turned the market tables upside down.

You could be feeling sad after all the anticipation of arriving at the temple for the feast of the Passover and the reality was different for a while. Take a moment in the calm to reflect on how you feel at this current time you have travelled with Jesus to find his Father's house and found it far from a house of God.....

Jesus quite rightly so taught those people in that place by his actions, his actions were to turn people from thinking it was a marketplace to a Holy place – he was restoring it back to what it should be. Jesus was angry because of his love for the father and the temple being an important place within the Jewish community. We do not often think of Jesus being someone that became angry but in that moment in that place he was dismayed that HIS Father's house was being used in such a way – the local people were putting their love for selling and making money before respecting the temple and worshipping God. Later after Jesus death the disciple's remembered his words at that time.

What do we put in our lives that distracts us from worshipping God? I suspect that the market didn't suddenly appear one day but started off with one or two people setting up their stall then gradually over time more sellers joined in and before long it was just the norm to have a market there and most people didn't even give it a thought, that it was indeed a holy place – this can be like ourselves, we can do something or put more importance into other things than worshipping God..... what have we put in our lives that has distracted us from worshipping God? What we have around us, what we fill our time with, how we live can all have an impact on how much time we spend with God and every so often we need to think about how much of our time do we truly give to God, how much time do we spend in prayer and worship without distractions and putting God first? Although we may think to have lots of wealth, items, or things we like to do, where is God in all of it? of course these things are nice, but they can also distract us from our love and faith in God.



Take a look back at the coins – as you look at them is there something you recognise in your life as a distraction? Is there something more important to you than spending time with God currently? God does not us to be unhappy by having nothing, but it is how much we value these things and do they get in the way of our relationship with him.

We should look at the actions of Jesus, the way he lived, his life, his teachings, and the way in which he died for us – his life was radical, he lived radically for God and never settled for the moderate and therefore we should never settle for anything less than living a radical, committed life for & with him.

Amen.

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